

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
December 29, 2003**

PRESENT: THOMAS C. REYNOLDS JR, CHAIRMAN; DOUGLAS R. COOK, Co CHAIRMAN; LAURA PETRAIN, SELECTMAN; LEON G. METHOT, SELECTMAN.

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR: ROBERT CHRISTENSEN
RECORDING SECRETARY: KELLY BUMPUS

GUEST: Frank Campana, Evelyn M. Connor, Steve Richardson, Chuck Metcalf, Denise Dorey, Carl Knapp, Gene Bilodeau.

The Selectmen's Meeting was held at the Town Office Building. Chairman Reynolds commenced the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

1. NONPUBLIC SESSION

Chairman Reynolds asked that everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Frank Campana – Mr. Campana stated that he had a request for the Selectmen. He stated that the school prepares a proposed budget. He stated that the Town has never put out a default budget and would like to see one. He stated that he personally goes through the school budget line by line and compares the figures and would like to do the same with the Town's budget. Chairman Reynolds stated that he does not see a problem with this request. Mr. Campana stated that he would like to have the default budget as a handout at the deliberative session.

Denise Dorey – Ms. Dorey asked the Board the percentage of increase for the 2004 budget? Selectman Methot stated that it will be at least three percent. Ms. Dorey asked how many articles will be on the ballot? Chairman Reynolds stated that they are looking at about the same amount as they had the previous year. Ms. Dorey asked what department has the highest increases? Selectman Methot stated that

without looking at it, he would say the Fire Department. Ms. Dorey asked how Mr. Knapp's budget is doing this year? Selectman Methot stated that by the end of the week it will be depleted.

Evelyn M. Connor – Ms. Connor wanted to inform the public that the Town Clerk's office will be closing at 4:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

3. AUDIT DISCUSSION

The Board reviewed the auditor's report and had a lengthy discussion regarding the comments made and the responses needed. The Board spoke with Ms. Elayne Pierson, Finance Administrator regarding the issues that were mentioned on the report. Ms. Pierson addressed the auditor's concern that she is appointed Deputy Treasurer when the Treasurer is away. She stated that this is on the report every year. Selectman Petrain stated that Ms. Pierson is already so busy she does not feel this should be another responsibility of hers. Ms. Pierson stated that the Treasurer's work has always been done on her own time. Selectman Methot stated that they are two incompatible positions. The Board agreed to address this with the Treasurer when he returns from vacation. Ms. Pierson then explained to the Board that this past year they have switched over to a modified accrual accounting practice as suggested by the auditor's. She stated that half the year was done on a cash only basis, and the other half on the new modified accrual system and this caused comments from the auditors. Selectman Petrain stated that she does not understand why the auditors commented on this particular issue when they had requested it in previous years. Ms. Pierson stated that this will not be an issue next year. Selectman Cook stated that the auditor's made comments about Sewer, Forest, and Conservation still being under the general fund. Ms. Pierson stated that she does not recommend having separate accounts for these departments.

The Board then spoke with Ms. Tina Morrison regarding auditor's comments concerning the Tax Collector's department. Ms. Morrison stated that she was surprised by the comments made. She stated that she provided the auditors with the information requested and was not contacted to provide anything further. She stated that she reconciles on a monthly basis, but the auditors did not request this information. Ms. Morrison stated that the auditor's have changed some figures and

she has not been provided with any of the changes. Selectman Cook asked Ms. Morrison to contact them regarding these issues and discuss them. Ms. Morrison stated that she will contact them and she must have the changes that were made in order to move forward.

The Board then spoke with Ms. Elayne Pierson again regarding cash reconciliations. Ms. Pierson stated that all entries were not on the computer at the time. She stated that she was balanced with the Treasurer on a manual basis. Selectman Methot asked Ms. Pierson if she kept both a manual ledger as well as entries on the computer? Ms. Pierson stated that she does keep records manually and electronically. Selectman Petrain stated she does not understand why it would be necessary to keep manual records. Ms. Pierson responded that the records on the computer are not detailed enough for her to recall each transaction at a later date. She stated that she keeps detailed, manual records so when questions come up, she can look back and explain what was done and why. Selectman Petrain stated that this information should also be entered into the computer. Selectman Cook stated that this runs into the issue of time and getting some help in the office for Elayne. He stated that there is only so much that one person can accomplish and the Board needs to make a decision about getting some help in that office. The Board and Ms. Pierson then discussed auditor's comments concerning accounts payable. Ms. Pierson explained that due to the change in account practices mid-year there were double reconciliation. She stated that this will not be an issue next year. Selectman Petrain asked if all accounts are being reconciled on a monthly basis? Ms. Pierson stated that not all accounts for the prior year can be done monthly, there is not time. The Board then discussed the issue of steal dated checks and the fact that they need to be reported to the State. Ms. Pierson stated that there are many checks that are outstanding. Chairman Reynolds stated that they need to make sure they are reporting them within the correct time frame. Selectman Cook stated that the RSA stated the Town has three years to report these to the State. Ms. Pierson then addressed the auditor's concerns regarding estimated revenue not being on the report provided. Ms. Pierson stated that the figures are on her copy of the report, and does not understand why they would not be on their copy. She stated she will look into this.

4. FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Purchase Order System –

Selectman Petrain asked Ms. Pierson if the purchase order system is being used? Ms. Pierson stated that the departments that require purchase orders the most are not on the server. She stated that there are also departments having trouble with the system and have not informed her of this.

Payroll Software –

Ms. Elayne Pierson stated that there is a problem with the new payroll software. She stated that the software accrues vacation time and sick time on a weekly basis and the Selectman's Office has always done this on a monthly basis. She stated that if they begin to cut checks with the new system, the pay stub will have weekly accrual figures for vacation time and sick time. She stated that if an employee leaves employment with the Town and the stub is brought to the Labor Board, the Town will need to pay the time accrued on the stub.

Additional Office Staff –

Selectman Cook stated that additional help is needed for the finance office. He stated that the Board needs to act on this issue. Selectman Cook made a comparison to the school and the many employees in the accounting department. He stated that although the school has many more employees, Mr. Pierson is doing the job of many. Selectman Petrain stated that there are many ways they can work with Ms. Pierson so that process is not so manual. She stated that there are many things that can now be done on the computer. The Board briefly discussed outsourcing the payroll duties. Ms. Pierson stated that outsourcing requires a lot of work as well.

Office Space –

The Board discussed additional office space for the Finance Administrator. Chairman Reynolds requested that Mr. Bob Christensen look into the possible options and make a decision. Chairman Reynolds requested Mr. Christensen inform the Board of the results.

2003 Budget –

The Board discussed the 2003 budget with Ms. Pierson. Ms. Pierson asked the Board if they would like her to factor in an estimated 15%

increase for health insurance for the second half of 2004? Chairman Reynolds stated these amounts should be added in.

5. BENEFIT REVIEW COMMITTEE – COLA DISCUSSION

Mr. Steve Richardson, Chairman of the Benefit Review Committee met with the Board to discuss the issue of a COLA for Town employees. He stated that the Board made a decision not to go with a COLA on December 1, 2003, a meeting which he was not notified about. He stated he would appreciate the common courtesy, as a volunteer, to be notified when the subject matter concerns the Benefit Review Committee. Mr. Richardson stated that he would like to share some points with the Board regarding COLA. He stated that he originally came to the Board with a plan for the Town, and that plan included COLA. He stated that the current percentages the Benefit Review Committee gave for merit increases were given with the understanding that COLA be in the equation. He stated that in the current state, the plan is not working. He stated that the average rate of raises for this year is 2.8%. He stated that with the plan that was submitted, the average pay increase was to be 2%. He stated that he suggests that COLA be entered into the equation, or the wage increases increase. Mr. Richardson then spoke about the fact that the Police Department handbook indicates that the Town will pay no less than 100% of the cost of health insurance. He stated that this is not fair and equal treatment and the Police Department handbook should be changed to match the Town Employee handbook which stated the Town will pay no less than 80% of the cost of health insurance. Mr. Richardson stated that he understands that the Police Department put their lives on the line while working for the Town, but also believes they are properly compensated. He stated that the Board was unfair to dismiss the option of COLA with the reasoning that the Town will pay 100% health insurance costs. He stated that unless the Board can guarantee employees will never have to pay health insurance costs, then the two cannot be compared. He stated that COLA is something that is guaranteed to the employees, and also something that all surrounding Towns offer. He stated that he truly believes a COLA is the correct thing to do for the employees. Mr. Richardson stated that he also believes the Town should be looking into alternative health insurance carriers. Selectman Cook stated that he believes the average time for shopping for insurance is every two or three years. Selectman Cook

stated that this is a responsibility of the Benefit Review Committee. Mr. Richardson stated that he has inquired about this in the past and was instructed that this is being taken care of. Selectman Cook stated that he believes applying the cost of living increase to the wage scale is the correct thing to do, and does not believe in an automatic wage increase. Selectman Cook stated that he also has to be concerned with the Town's ability to pay. Chairman Reynolds stated that the evaluation process done by the Benefit Review Committee is an excellent one. He stated that he does not know how to get around the fact that insurance costs are going through the roof. Also, because the Town is comprised of small departments which tend to evaluate their employees at a higher level, the merit increase percentage is higher. Mr. Richardson stated that he does not believe you can compare COLA with health insurance. Selectman Petrain stated that the Board does not have to set the COLA at the current 2.1%, it can be set at whatever percentage the Board decides. This was a discussion of the Benefit Review Committee comparing wages with the private sector and not only with surrounding Towns. Mr. Richardson stated with the absence of COLA, the employee purchasing power becomes less. He stated that he would like the Board to consider this, if not now, then down the road. Mr. Richardson asked if there is a reason that they cannot change the Police Department's handbook to match the other employee's handbook. Selectman Cook stated that he would like the Benefit Review Committee to look into cost savings for health insurance and will then revisit the subject. Selectman Cook stated that after review of the information he may decide to change the employee handbook to match the Police Department handbook. Mr. Richardson thanked the Board for their time and stated that he believes COLA is a very important factor.

6. BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Carl Knapp discussed the Public Works 2003 budget with the Board. The Board reviewed the budget.

The Board went over the 2004 requested budget amounts. Chairman Reynolds stated that adjustments need to be made to include wage increases and health insurance increases. He stated that they also need to factor in electric and heating costs for the Safety Complex. The Board reviewed budget and made adjustments. Mr. Chuck Metcalf

discussed Park and Recreation's budget and adjustments to be made to the lawn care line. Mr. Metcalf asked the Board their plans if the lawn care Warrant Article does not pass? The Board did not answer this question.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Safety Complex –

Mr. Christensen stated that the propane was being worked on that day, but his last update indicated that it had not yet been turned on. He stated that there is a problem with the pipes backing up. He stated that the plumber is blaming the electrician, and the electrician is blaming the plumber. Selectman Cook stated that he will look into this. Selectman Petrain asked if there will be a traffic light on Center Rd? There was brief discussion regarding this.

Facility Use Form –

Mr. Chuck Metcalf spoke with the Board regarding the new facility use form. He stated that it was his understanding that the Board decided to put this in the hands of Park and Recreation, but still will need to sign the form. The Board discussed the process and the fact that the Board has the power to waive the insurance requirement. The Board decided to allow Park and Recreation to have control of scheduling and waiving the insurance requirement. Mr. Metcalf then asked the Board about the line on the form prohibiting gambling of any kind. He stated that the Town Hall holds bingo, and is this something that will continue to be allowed? Selectman Cook stated that the form should be changed to prohibit any illegal gambling. The Board agreed.

Phone Lines–

Selectman Methot asked if there will be a charge involved with canceling the Centrex system for the Police Department? Mr. Christensen stated he was instructed that he did not have to be involved in the phone line issues. Selectman Cook clarified the fact that Mr. Christensen did not have to be involved with the canceling and installing of the phone system, but they still need to know if there will be a cost incurred. Selectman Methot stated he will look into this.

Cell Tower –

Selectman Methot stated that in conversations with Ms. Naomi Bolton, it was brought to his attention that if the Fire Department is looking to put an antenna on the cell tower now is the time to do it while the crane is in the area.

Fire Alarm at South Weare Fire Station –

Selectman Methot stated that the fire alarm that was installed at the South Weare Fire Station two years ago has never been in working order. He asked the Board if they would like to hold the company who installed the system libel? He stated that the system never met code. Chairman Reynolds asked who inspected the system. Selectman Methot stated that apparently no one inspected it. Selectman Methot stated that the alarm system has now been fixed and is in working order.

Granite State Telephone Authorization –

Mr. Christensen gave the Board a form, from the Finance Administrator, authorizing specific employees of the Town to contact Granite State Telephone regarding the phone system. The Board stated that Mr. Christensen should be added to the list of employees authorized to make changes to the phone system.

Cell Tower –

Mr. Christensen stated that in regards to Selectman Methot's earlier comments regarding installation of antennas to the cell tower, he has been informed it is too late. He stated he was informed that several additional costs will now be involved. Selectman Methot stated they need to speak with Mr. Paul Morin regarding this because the company had stated that they would install antennas at no cost while in the area. Selectman Cook stated that Norris Rd. has a posted 6 ton limit. Mr. Carl Knapp explained that this posting should have been taken down, and also he was contacted for permission for the crane to be on the road.

Computer Equipment –

Mr. Christensen stated that the computer fund stands at approximately \$1,100. He stated the cost for the needed Microsoft Office 2003 upgrades is \$1,090.05. Chairman Reynolds made a motion to authorize the purchase of five copies of Microsoft Office 2003,

expending up to \$1,090.05 contingent upon funds being available. Seconded by Selectman Petrain. A vote was taken. Motion passed 3 in favor; 1 opposed (Selectman Cook).

Cell Phone Bill –

Mr. Christensen informed the Board that they have received a collection agency letter for a cell phone bill incurred by an employee under a Town Plan several years ago. He stated that the collection notice is under the Town of Weare. Selectman Petrain stated the employee was sent a letter in the past informing them that the Town is not responsible for this bill. Selectman Petrain instructed Mr. Christensen to send the employee a strongly worded, certified letter regarding this issue.

Manifests –

Chairman Reynolds authorized the Board of Selectmen to sign manifests and order the Treasurer to sign checks dated December 31, 2003. Accounts Payable - \$646,711.52, Gross Payrolls - \$26,059.67. For a total of \$672,771.19. Seconded by Selectman Petrain. A vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously

8. NEW BUSINESS

Police Department-

Selectman Methot informed the Board that one of the Police Officers will be going to serve in the Middle East and he had asked the Police Chief if the Town will pay the officer a differential during this time. Selectman Methot stated the Police Chief informed him that the officer will be making more money than he receives from the Town, but the Police Chief will be continuing the officer's health benefits.

Canceled Selectmen's Meeting –

Selectman Petrain stated that in regards to the canceled Selectmen's meeting on December 15th, she feels one person should not be able to cancel a meeting. Selectman Cook stated that he has already addressed the issue at the previous meeting and that he made the decision based on the weather. He stated that there was nothing on the agenda he felt was so pressing that it could not wait. Selectman Petrain stated that she would like to see if a person can't make a meeting and a quorum is available that that be considered in the

future. She stated that it may be in the rights of the Chairman or Co Chairman to randomly cancel a meeting...Selectman Cook stated that it was not randomly done, and was not because he was unable to attend. He stated that it was done due to the weather and he did not say to continue everything until next week. He stated that it is the Chairman's decision to reschedule. Selectman Cook stated that last week when this was discussed, no other member disagreed. Selectman Petrain stated that she is disagreeing and voicing what she is disagreeing with. Selectman Cook stated that maybe Selectman Petrain should make all the meetings instead of just two per month. Selectman Petrain stated that obviously weekly meetings aren't that important if you can just randomly cancel them. Selectman Cook again stated that it was not random and done due to the weather. Selectman Petrain stated that the roads were fine that evening and does not feel that one person should be the voice of the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Cook responded that is why there is a Chairman and a Co Chairman and stated again that the meeting was not randomly canceled. He stated that he looked at the agenda and saw there was nothing so pressing that it could not wait. He stated that this was already discussed last week when Selectman Petrain was not present and everyone agreed. Selectman Cook went on to state that if Selectman Petrain feels that she is missing out on something, then she should come to the meetings. Selectman Petrain stated she does come to the meetings. Selectman Cook stated that she comes to meetings twice per month. Selectman Petrain stated this is correct, except when the meetings are canceled. Selectman Cook stated that unfortunately, it was a meeting that Selectman Petrain was going to be here for. Selectman Petrain stated that there was no reason to cancel. Selectman Cook stated that is her opinion and she can make the decision when she is Chairman. Selectman Cook stated that it is unfair that Selectman Petrain jams up everyone and does not want to attend the meetings. Selectman Cook asked Selectman Petrain why she does not give up half her Selectmen's salary? Selectman Petrain stated that she is keeping track of the meetings that other Selectmen miss. Selectman Cook responded, "I'm sure you are."

Abijah Bridge Contract –

Mr. Carl Knapp informed the Board that the contract for the Abijah Bridge project has been received. Selectman Methot made a motion to authorize the Public Works Director to sign the Abijah Bridge contract.

Seconded by Selectman Petrain. A vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Contingent Upon Funds –

Selectman Petrain asked if the Board intended to make motions this evening contingent on fund available. Chairman Reynolds stated that this is the last week they have to make the motions. Selectman Cook stated that he is not in favor of making motions when they are not sure what will be left in the budget. He stated that his first concern would be to make sure the salt shed is filled. Chairman Reynolds made a motion to purchase up to \$10,000 of salt out of the 2003 budget contingent upon funds being available. Seconded by Selectman Methot. A vote was taken. Motion passed 3 in favor; 1 opposed (Selectman Cook).

9. ADJOURNMENT

Selectman Methot made a motion to adjourn at 11:52 p.m. Seconded by Chairman Reynolds. A vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

A True Record

Kelly Bumpus, Recording Secretary